2015

Equality Report Card
Fiche de rendement
sur l'égalité des femmes

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Conseil consultatif sur la situation de la femme de l'Î. P. É.

Introduction

The Equality Report Card is a process to assess our Province's progress towards women's equality goals. The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women's goal is to work collaboratively with government to help the Province achieve high grades in all priority areas.

The priority actions and other considerations assessed in the 2015 Equality Report Card were established for the mandate of government which began in 2011 and ended with the May 4, 2015 election. A 2013 Equality Report Card assessed the first two year's of that government's mandate.

The 2015 Equality Report Card uses 2013 results as a benchmark.

Equality Report Cards for previous mandates of government were published in 2008 (pilot), 2009 and 2011.

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Scoring Key

The 2015 Equality Report Card rates the Prince Edward Island Government's progress towards women's equality goals from 2013 to 2015 as a **C**. This is the same grade as in 2013.

22 out of a possible 45 points
for **PRIORITY ACTION AREAS** set by the PEIACSW

These priority action areas were set in 2012, selected from recommendations the Advisory Council had made to government in past Report Cards, briefs and submissions, policy guides, and formal meetings. Some recommendations date back many years.

32 out of a possible 45 points
for **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS** in each category

These considerations include initiatives that government nominated and Council assessed as good practices to support equality goals.

10 out of a possible 10 **BONUS** points

These highlight excellent projects and initiatives that are good practices for continuing to improve the status of women and girls and their families in Prince Edward Island.

THE TOTAL SCORE OF 64 OUT OF A POSSIBLE 100 IS AN OVERALL GRADE OF C.

Priority Action Areas
Little or No Progress – 0 points
Some Progress – ½ point
Good Progress – 1 point

Other Considerations
Much Worse – 1 point
Somewhat Worse – 2 points
Status Quo – 3 points
Somewhat Better – 4 points
Much Better – 5 points

Bonus – 1 point each

Total points correspond to these grades:

49 or less = F	59 or less = D
60–63 = C–	**64–66 = C**
67–69 = C+	70–73 = B–
74–76 = B	77–79 = B+
80–83 = A–	84–86 = A
87 or more = A+	

Assessments are based on information updated to April 6, 2015, prior to the election call.

Overall Assessment 2015

This assessment of the Prince Edward Island government's progress towards women's equality goals covers the period from June 2013 to April 2015, when an election was called. The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women assesses overall government actions with a grade of **C**.

This report reviews actions by the Liberal government led by Premier Robert Ghiz until January 2015 and by Premier Wade MacLauchlan from January 2015 to April 2015. The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women throughout this period was Hon. Valerie Docherty. While election promises or actions since the election may be mentioned in this report as positive directions for government action, they are not the basis of assessment.

What does a C mean?

The Advisory Council sets the status quo as a **D**, so **C** represents small but important steps. Some steps towards women's equality are, in fact, substantial. Some highlights since 2013 include the following:

- Gender and diversity considerations now required in memos to Executive Council for policy-making.
- Improvements in mental health supports and addictions services that begin to address a province-wide crisis.
- Government departments that are more responsive to gender and different needs in their workplaces.
- Some serious attention to issues of violence and commitment to structures that help violence prevention.

These substantial commitments come in the face of difficult social, cultural, and economic times for PEI women and families. Poverty and other vulnerabilities expose gaps in programs and services:

- The inadequacy of the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty, especially to support social inclusion.
- Harsh impacts from federal cuts and devolution of federal programs, especially in adult education and training.
- Increasing gaps in services and supports for sexual and reproductive health.
- Social services and social programs that continue to strip people of their dignity.
- Insufficient collaboration with and funding for community-based organizations who provide front-line service.

Focus Group Comments

- "When did we move from living in a society to living in an economy? In times of austerity, supports for vulnerable people are the first to go."
- "Everything is interrelated. We have to learn to support people through all their issues. Wrap-around services to support the whole individual and their family."
- "There isn't an understanding of equity and social justice, of the unique barriers and challenges disabled people face. They are trying to treat everyone the same, but that doesn't recognize that the playing field is not level and everyone does not have the same opportunities from the outset."

- "Why should people receive different responses when they have an advocate with them than they receive when they go alone for assistance? ... They only give you what you are entitled to if you put up a fight for it."

SUMMARY

From 2013 to 2015, government was not able to increase its overall grade from a C, but the Advisory Council on the Status of Women believes strongly that government is capable of high grades on women's equality. We look forward to working collaboratively with the new government in the future. Council will consult with representatives of the new government to set priority action areas for the next Report Card in 2017.

Making Equality a Priority

We expect the provincial government to meet its commitments to analyze the effects of existing and proposed legislation, policy, and budgeting on everyday Island women and men and diverse groups. This means applying gender and diversity analysis in planning, evaluation, decision-making processes, management practices, and organizational culture.

Priority Actions

Equality Report Card questionnaires completed by all departments of government — Good Progress (*2013: Good Progress*)

- All departments completed a questionnaire. All were on time. The responses were on the whole excellent: thorough, clear, and complete. They form the basis of this report, and we are very grateful for the cooperation.

Evidence that the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty reduction strategy applies gender and diversity analysis — Little or No Progress (*2013: Some Progress*)

- Community Services and Seniors reports that elements of the Social Action Plan differentially address the needs of women and diverse populations compared to the province's population as a whole. They cite examples including implementation of a multi-year food rate increase for Social Assistance recipients, which will have a greater impact on women; and elder abuse awareness grants which would provide greater assistance to seniors in situations of vulnerability.
- The failure here is of the Social Action Plan itself, which has done little or nothing to address entrenched poverty in Prince Edward Island. This poverty differentially affects women, seniors, Aboriginal people, and people with disabilities, among other groups. The longer poverty remains unaddressed, the deeper the disadvantage and impoverishment grow for vulnerable groups.

Commitment to updating the 2010 statistical profile of women, with target dates — Good Progress (*2013: Some Progress*)

- The Interministerial Women's Secretariat reports that work has been ongoing to update the Statistical Review for 2015. Due to the changes to Statistics Canada and how they collect data (changes to the long-form census), there have been challenges and extra work involved with the update. The target release date for the update is October 2015 for Women's History Month. We look forward to seeing this publication.

Gender and diversity analysis training piloted and evaluated by senior managers in Community Services and Seniors — Good Progress (*2013: Good Progress*)

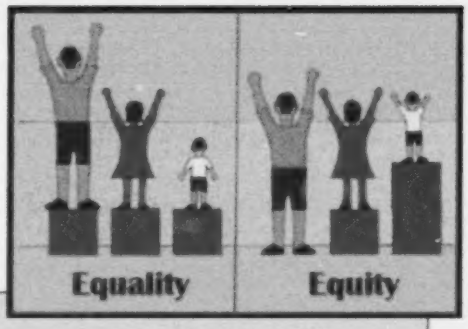
- The specific training requested here took place in 2013 and was credited in the 2013 Equality Report Card. Since then, we are very pleased that training on gender and diversity analysis (as well as a seniors lens and work-in-progress on a disability lens) has been part of the Policy PEI Learning Series. This training was delivered to staff across government who are involved in policy-related work such as planning, preparation of reports, program design, and evaluation. This is very good progress, and we look forward to expanded training in policy and planning and to greater application of the gender and diversity lens.

Concrete example(s) of applied gender and diversity analysis from at least half of government departments — Some Progress (*2013: Good Progress*)

- While five out of ten departments provided examples of applied gender and diversity analysis, some examples described programs that may have different outcomes for women and men and diverse groups but did not describe any actual analysis. Examples came from the departments of Agriculture and Forestry, Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Wellness, Innovation and Advanced Learning, and Community Services and Seniors. The number of departments reporting examples of gender and diversity analysis is down from six out of ten in 2013.
- In the coming months and years, Council members expect to see positive effects from Executive Council initiatives that will require consideration of gender and diversity analysis as a matter of course.
- A trend to watch for: Across government, departments seem better able to identify how they have increased gender and diversity equity internally, for their own departmental staff, than for the general public. First internal steps need to translate into changes that demonstrably improve the status of women across PEI.

Making Equality a Priority: Other Considerations

Highlights



A newcomer to Canada said of PEI: "Women's rights are well-protected. It is a very good place for women and children. Women have very similar rights as men in Canada. So we feel very happy."

- Throughout her time as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Hon. Valerie Docherty gave a consistently high profile to the status of women portion of her portfolio. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women valued this boost to awareness of gender.
- The excellent Interministerial Women's Secretariat document *Gender and Diversity Analysis in Public Policy and Programs* is referred to in the revised (November 2013) Guidelines for Executive Council Documents. This means gender and diversity analysis are now part of the basic expectations for proposals that go through Executive Council. This is huge.
- It was helpful to have the director of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat integrated into senior management of Community Services and Seniors the past several years. The Secretariat has responsibilities related to both gender and diversity analysis and to the disability lens and incorporates these into discussions.
- To provide a gender lens, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat is a member of many committees within and outside of government, including nine federal/provincial/territorial committees or working groups, two Atlantic Senior Officials committees or initiatives, five intergovernmental initiatives, and 21 provincial committees. This is terrific. It also means the office is spread terrifically thin.
- Community-based organizations remind government they provide cost-efficient and essential services in support of gender equality and diversity. They are grateful for generous in-kind supports, especially direct and in-kind rent for office space. They call for funding for unfunded but in-demand services such as referrals for citizens.

Bonus Selection

- Executive Council completed work to include gender and diversity implications in the revised Executive Council Memorandum format, supported by policy training and development applying gender and diversity analysis. These are big steps. We look forward to positive effects from this work.

Assessment of Other Considerations: Somewhat Better *(2013: Somewhat Better)*

Focus Groups Say...

- A focus group of newcomers led to valuable observations about gender equality in Canada. One woman said, "I see things that are not acceptable for women and children, but the women do not even understand their rights and their responsibilities."
- Another added, "For many immigrant women, there are things that they do, that they practice, because it was part of the norm in their countries. It is only in Canada that they realize it is wrong. It shocks you because here it is considered violence against women. You experienced it just as the way things were. I was one of those women. There is a big need for awareness of their rights as women, and what they do not have to accept as violence." A third woman reflected, "The ladies of my community are getting more vocal, more comfortable to express their views, the longer time they live here."
- Another theme in focus groups was the importance of community organizations to making equality a priority and delivering essential services that support equity. One focus group participant recalled, "We used to have funding for community organizations that made them sustainable, remember? We need to reallocate resources to community groups that deal with needs holistically, to accompany a basic income guarantee program." Another said, "How much do we rely on family and volunteers, mostly women, to run this province? I think we need to pressure government to support NGOs that do crucial work. Our community wouldn't survive without them. There is a whole sector that needs to be acknowledged and funded."

Category Summary

Prince Edward Island continues to lead Canada in the tools and resources it has developed for gender and diversity analysis, and integrating those tools in policy proposals and policy training can only help. However, this work needs more support to take hold. Most crucially, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat and other diversity-supporting offices need more staff and resources to advance the work.

Women in Decision-Making

We expect the provincial government to actively encourage women's advancement. We also expect the provincial government to break down barriers to women's leadership in elected and appointed decision-making positions and in the public service sector.

Priority Actions

Increased number of women in Executive Council

Little or No Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

➡ Prior to the election, under Premier Ghiz only 3 of 11 members of Cabinet were women and under Premier MacLauchlan, only 2 of 9. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker were both women. The Speaker's role is important and prominent; however, the role also takes her voice out of debate. As of April 2015, only 4 of 13 deputy ministers/senior managers were women. The PEI Coalition for Women in Government calls for a minimum of 1/3 women in Cabinet and senior management, to ensure a critical mass of representation.

Increased number of women appointed to agencies, boards, and commissions

Some Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

↗ Of 346 appointments made to 71 boards since April 2013, 155 were women. That means women made up 45% of appointments in the past two years – up eight points since 2013. This is good progress indeed.

↘ Unfortunately, the percentage of women applicants to Participate PEI is down six points since 2013, to just 33% of applicants. This points to the need for extra measures to meet gender and diversity goals. Council members are looking forward to the results of work being done at the Federal/Provincial/Territorial level on increasing women on public boards and to PEI applying recommendations from that forum.

Increased number of women appointed as chairs or vice-chairs of agencies, boards, and commissions

Good Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

↗ From April 2013 to March 2015, twenty of 42 chair or vice-chair appointments (48%) were women, and 17 of 36 boards (47%) had women appointed as chairs. This is a significantly higher appointment rate than the previous high of 27%. This is excellent news and strong evidence of effective government work towards the government-wide goal of gender parity on agencies, boards, and commissions. The next focus should be ensuring appointments of under-represented groups and appointment to non-traditional roles.

Specific, publicly advertised gender and diversity goals for appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

↗ Recruitment notices for the Health PEI board in Fall 2014 sought "to ensure that the overall Board profile reflects a balance of gender, geography, language, ethnicity, and competency profiles." Subsequently, a woman and man were appointed to the board in March 2015. This is just the kind of public advertisement we are looking for.

➡ Participate PEI's reported numbers suggest that while the number of women *appointed* is growing, the number of women *applying* is lagging. There is work to be done to break down barriers to women self-nominating.

➡ For the boards it is responsible for, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat applies a rubric to applications and outlines what genders, groups, geographic regions, and even professions are under-represented, to help inform decisions about appointments. We would like to see this practice spread to all departments.

More balanced proportion of women managers and women workers in departments where women have been under-represented in management and/or where women are in non-traditional roles

Good Progress
(2013: Good Progress)

↗ Overall, across all reporting departments, women make up 73% of total workers (*up slightly from 2013*) and 50% of managers (*down slightly from 2013*). There is an almost 23-point gap between women workers and women managers, compared to a 16-point gap in 2013. With increasing pressures on the public sector, this widening gap will require close attention to ensure cutbacks do not disproportionately affect women. Women make up 69% of full-time workers and 82% of part-time workers. These numbers are consistent with 2013 numbers.

↗ There continues to be strong balance between the proportion of women managers and women workers across government. Nine out of 12 reporting departments have a gap of 10 points or less between the total percentage of women workers and the percentage of women in management. This is down from 10/12 in 2013.

Women in Decision-Making: Other Considerations

Highlights

- The 26 health agencies, boards, and commissions have already achieved gender parity, well ahead of the government-wide target time for reaching parity. Moreover, health boards have taken steps to balance the ratio of women and men on boards traditionally dominated by one gender, such as sports and nursing.
- Municipal Affairs again encouraged Islanders to put their names forward to run in the 2014 Municipal Elections, with an emphasis on boosting the number of women candidates. The Minister made a statement about the importance of gender balance, and advertisements and a promotional video featured a woman councillor.
- The numbers of women nominated to run in the election were up for some parties, down for others, and in total constituted 31/105 candidates, or almost 30% overall. (LIB: 7/27, a party high; PC: 6/27; NDP: 9/27; GRN: 9/24). Numbers of women in government are not increasing naturally over time and will not do so until barriers are addressed. With no women as party leaders, visibility of women in politics is very low.
- The only recommendation for increasing the numbers of women in elected office from the Coalition for Women in Government that the government acted on in the last several years was to put in place a fixed election date. Then government abandoned the fixed election date.
- Given that women are the majority of workers in the public service, women's incomes are disproportionately tied to government investment in the public service. Women's incomes are also disproportionately affected by reforms to public service pensions such as those in 2014.

> A newcomer to Canada spoke hopefully: "It seems to be getting better for women in the past five years I have been here. Even at (PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada), most of the staff are women, that is good to see. Even in our community there are more women getting out to work outside the home."

Bonus Selections

- The 2013 Speech from the Throne committed to "achieving greater representation of women on all appointed provincial boards and commissions, and achieving overall parity within five years." This is a Big Deal.
- Funding and subsidies from the Interministerial Women's Secretariat allowed women and NGOs in PEI to participate in A Bold Vision when they could not otherwise afford to participate. This was accomplished with no loss to grants to community organizations working on women's equality goals. Additionally, several women from the conference were inspired to run for public office. Kudos!

Assessment of Other Considerations: **Somewhat Better** ***(2013: Somewhat Better)***

Focus Groups Say...

1993

- The Chairs Circle of past Chairpersons of the Advisory Council asked what has become of our visible political women? In 1993, when we had our "famous five" women as Lieutenant Governor, Premier, Opposition Leader, Speaker, and Deputy Speaker, it seemed women were set to take their permanent place at the table in political decision-making. In the 20 years since, we have struggled to meet the marks of the past, let alone surpass them.
- Newcomer women talked about specific barriers to their advancement: "Credential recognition is always a challenge for newcomers. When we apply to migrate, we are selected based on our qualifications, but once you arrive those credentials are nothing. Nothing. I am experienced [in a professional field], but I cannot get even an interview to work at the counter [in a workplace in my field]. Unless I go back to university and get Canadian credentials." Another said, "Please just give a little recognition to women who have professional skills and experiences. They have so much to contribute but are not able to once they arrive. It is very frustrating."

Category Summary

Let's not underestimate the immediate and long-term effects of an increase of women on provincial agencies, boards, and commissions: research shows that gender balance leads to better decision-making. While the number of women elected and in Cabinet appears to be in collapse, women who gain board experience will be well positioned to step up to elected leadership as barriers come down. What is needed at Participate PEI is what is needed also in the public service: recruitment and promotion of women, diverse groups, and under-represented groups. We are hopeful that the public service will continue to be supported as a major employer of women.

Violence Prevention

We expect the provincial government to work towards ending violence against women and children and ending all forms of family violence by providing and supporting programs and services that aim to prevent violence and that support victims when violence occurs.

Priority Actions

Enhanced core funding for Family Violence Prevention Services, Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, and/or other community-based organizations that support violence prevention or help victims of violence

Some Progress *(2013: Little/No Progress)*

- Over the two-year period for this report, funding for PEI Family Violence Prevention Services was increased just over 5%, by $31,700, to $649,100. Funding for the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre increased almost 8%, by $16,900, to $239,700. Amounts in 2013–2014 only *restored* a 3% funding reduction from the previous year; increases in 2014-2015 were small. In March 2015, further one-time funding was provided to these organizations, as part of $700,000 committed to non-governmental organizations that provide essential services in the community.
- Because services provided by non-governmental organizations are truly *essential*, we call on government to make permanent, sustained investments rather than one-time contributions to organizations, especially to support front-line services and front-line workers. Despite the increases noted and one-time funding, grants to community organizations over the years barely keep pace with increasing costs – and certainly do not fill growing gaps in private fundraising as many willing Island donors face their own economic hardships.

Example(s) of enhanced training for intervention in family violence, relationship violence, and violence against women and children for police and justice workers

Some Progress *(2013: Good Progress)*

- The Victims of Family Violence Act Steering Committee continues to do a good job leading the parts of training for police and justice workers that the Province is responsible for. One highlight from 2013 to 2015 included a focus group with police supervisors to get input on training needs.
- The updated Provincial Child Sexual Abuse Protocol was implemented in 2013. Six government departments, all Island police services, and both First Nations signed on to the protocol to support an integrated, collaborative response to child sexual abuse. Training sessions for police and other service providers were held in June 2013.

New Woman Abuse Protocols developed and applied, or example(s) of existing Woman Abuse Protocols updated, enhanced, or evaluated

Good Progress *(2013: Good Progress)*

- The Police Response to Domestic Violence Protocol has been reviewed and updated. Significantly, the Social Assistance Family Violence Protocol was finalized since 2013 and was then strengthened by entrenching it as a *policy*. This is a major step. Next step: monitoring that the protocol is consistently used and applied.
- Council continues to consider domestic abuse protocols essential tools for responding to violence. We continue to look forward to evaluation of protocols, to appropriate funds and time being set aside for training front-line workers who need to apply the protocols – and, crucially, to seeing updated Emergency Room Protocols in Health.

Example(s) of enhanced and specialized programs, information, or supports for victims of family violence, relationship violence, or violence against women and children from specific groups (such as newcomers, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, or youth)

Good Progress *(2013: Good Progress)*

- Examples of diversity-sensitive violence prevention highlighted by Council members include a new mandate for the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention (PAC), PAC micro-grants to municipalities, and small grants to community groups through the Seniors' Secretariat and Interministerial Women's Secretariat. Council members continue to be impressed with internationally-recognized work on CyberSafe Girls and the hypersexualization of girls, led by Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women.

Measures and/or resources to allow adult protection workers to provide more help to adults in compromised circumstances

Good Progress *(2013: Some Progress)*

- Government has updated the Adult Protection Act (Section 4) to require mandatory reporting by professionals working with vulnerable adults and suspected cases. This applies, for example, to police, nursing, long-term care, counselling services, and group homes. This update to legislation is a major step and has been followed up with training to all Social Assistance and Disability Support Program staff in PEI. This training will provide front-line Social Program staff with a greater ability to detect and assist adults in compromised circumstances.

Violence Prevention: Other Considerations

Highlights

- The Council recognizes the excellent work of the Family Violence Prevention Coordinator in all aspects of violence prevention. This role is so important to the Province. The Council also strongly supports the work of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention and is pleased this Committee received a new five-year mandate and a capable and credible new Chairperson in Ann Sherman. Council would like to see violence prevention well-resourced and well-supported and given a high priority.
- In 2013 and 2014, the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women Forum presented their work on the Cybersafe Girl Initiative at the Canadian Mission at the United Nations in New York City. This is the first time that a Minister from PEI has presented here, so this is quite an achievement. At the 2014 meetings, Canada submitted that cybersafety be included as a topic of discussion at the Canada-hosted UN side-event "Girls Advocacy Roundtables" at the request of the Atlantic Senior Officials Forum. Additionally, Justice sponsored, in conjunction with Justice Canada, a project on cyberbullying coordinated by Women's Network PEI. The project resulted in the publication of *Taking Stock of Cyberbullying: A Scan of the PEI Context*. This work, plus ongoing Status of Women Canada funded work by EPWIC, all helps to respond proactively to emerging issues for youth and others.

"There are so many lines of vulnerability that women are negotiating when they are leaving violent/abusive situations that often have poverty and addictions issues rooted in."
– A focus group participant

- Premier Ghiz and the Council of the Federation offered crucial support for a national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women in 2013 and again in 2014. This push must continue following the 2015 national roundtable on missing and murdered Indigenous women and in light of recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We challenge the Province to partner meaningfully with the PEI Aboriginal Women's Association to develop next steps that include local, culture-based responses to preventing and addressing violence.
- Community education and public awareness-raising on elder abuse continue to be strong. Capacity to respond to elder abuse continues to need more attention. For example, Adult Protection is only mandated to deal with adults who are deemed vulnerable or mentally incompetent. Is there any fair and just way the definition of "vulnerable" could be opened up so that being abused is enough to spur action?

Bonus Selection

- The Child Sexual Abuse Advisory Committee updated the excellent resource "Children's Sexual Behaviours: A Parent's Guide." Minister Responsible for the Status of Women Valerie Docherty's defense of the guide in the face of unfair, very public criticism was a shining moment.

Assessment of Other Considerations: Somewhat Better *(2013: Somewhat Better)*

Focus Groups Say...

- A focus group participant heartbreakingly said, "Most women just keep quiet to keep the respect of the family and to protect the children. They will put up with the violence. Especially here, where the communities are so small and everyone will know who you are. Protecting the family is what keeps women quiet."
- The problem of violence against women is not going away. Another focus group participant observed, "I am noticing internalized violence in women – very often (women) accept levels of violence in their own lives, for themselves, that they would immediately see as wrong for others." Another woman said, "Emotional violence is very damaging – beyond the bruises you can see."

Category Summary

The past two years have kept family violence and violence against women tragically in the national and provincial spotlight. Prevention is essential, and we must keep root causes of violence firmly in mind: inequality and oppression. In the case of Aboriginal women and men, colonization and discrimination. In the case of youth and seniors, age discrimination. In the case of people with disabilities, ableism. In the case of people of colour, racism. The list goes on. Help and support must be trauma-informed, anti-oppression, and well-funded.

Access to Justice

We expect the provincial government to place high priority on ensuring women and families have access to justice, particularly for family law, and to provide and support programs and services that assist people to receive legal help for legal problems.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Implementation of a pilot project for domestic violence court option

Little or No Progress
(*2013: Some Progress*)

- In the November 2014 Throne Speech, Government announced that a new therapeutic model of services for adults with mental health and addiction problems in the justice system will be created. This could, but would not necessarily, include a domestic violence court option. The Department of Justice identifies that their intent is to build on partnerships and services that are already available and reports discussions are occurring with the federal government to explore funding opportunities to assist in further expanding on these partnerships. There have been no further public updates on this work to date. Recommendations for a domestic violence court option have now been before government more than a dozen years.

Steps towards expanded resources for family mediation, counselling, and conflict resolution before families reach court

Good Progress
(*2013: Some Progress*)

- The Family Court Counsellors' Office continues to provide free mediation service province-wide. The mediation position has recently been expanded from an 80% position to a 100% position. It is also positive that the mediator will participate in a pilot project examining the feasibility of a Parenting Coordination Service in PEI.
- Council members are pleased to know that in the past year, the Family Law Section partnered with the Supreme Court judiciary to revise the service delivery model used in court-ordered parenting arrangements assessments. The Family Court Counsellors' Office developed a suite of assessment options in parenting arrangements assessments to provide more timely, tailored, and relevant information for particular issues before the Court. Additionally, a new initiative to make court orders accessible online to justice and law enforcement personnel means they can review the wording of an actual court order while in the field and allows for a better-informed response.

Improved access to family law legal aid lawyers

Little or No Progress
(*2013: Little/No Progress*)

- While family legal aid expenditures in 2013–2014 increased 6.5% over the previous year, front-line workers who help families access justice see no improvements in access to family law legal aid. Most people earn too much money to qualify for legal aid, but too little to afford the legal services necessary to meaningfully address legal problems. Council members acknowledge that an increase to legal aid alone will not solve the crisis in access to family justice, but funding must be part of the solution. A full 56% of PEI's total legal aid expenditures in 2013–2014 were for family law legal aid, and 73% of family legal aid recipients were women. Given the gaps in access to justice, public legal education from CLIA PEI is a very important service government helpfully supports.

Steps towards establishing a provincial child advocate whose mandate includes advocating for children whose families are involved with the family justice system

Little or No Progress
(*2013: Little/No Progress*)

- PEI remains the only province without a child or youth advocate, and there have been no actual steps reported towards establishing a child advocate. In the recent Hennessey/Campbell coroner's inquest into a murder-suicide that resulted in the death of a child, both experts and the jury recommended a child advocate for PEI.
- In the absence of a child advocate, Justice reports that social work clinicians in the Family Court Counsellors' Office conduct Court authorized Child Needs/Parenting Arrangement Assessments which assist the Court in determining appropriate parenting arrangements in the best interests of the children concerned. The social work clinicians also conduct interviews with the child, if age appropriate, to determine and report on the child's wishes.

Steps towards creating and enacting a "triage" system for family law matters

Good Progress
(*2013: Good Progress*)

- Council members are heartened that the pre-motion conference procedure (triage), implemented by the Supreme Court, continues with good success. In this procedure, the parties and legal counsel meet with a judge prior to making an application, filing affidavits, and seeking an interim order. This procedure is contributing to settlement of custody and access matters at a much earlier stage in the legal process. As a result, fewer parenting arrangement assessments are now being ordered.

Access to Justice: Other Considerations

Highlights

- The Family Court Counsellors' Office is partnering with the Law Foundation of PEI on a project to examine the feasibility of implementing a Parenting Coordination Service. This could be used to have a properly trained person assist high-conflict parents to implement their child custody/access orders/agreements. The idea for the project stemmed from the 2011 Think Tank on Family Justice and the National Action Committee Report on access to justice. It is a model used in other parts of Canada. While it is sounds like a very good model, more study is needed to ensure it would not take priority over other long-standing recommendations.
- With the federal roll-out of victims' rights legislation and the opportunity to learn about Victim Services (and lack thereof) in other parts of Canada, we were again reminded how fortunate we are to have professional, accessible, and compassionate Victim Services funded by our government. This is not the case everywhere.
- In February 2015, the Provincial Correctional Centre implemented a new 25 session Women Offender Program for all women offenders. The sessions examine the underlying factors that have led participants to be involved in the court system and also cover a number of woman-specific issues. Council looks forward to hearing more about this and other interventions for incarcerated women and women offenders, who are some of the most vulnerable women in PEI.

"The key issue in justice is access - can't get into courts, can't afford a lawyer, can't even get advice. A lot of very vulnerable and marginalized people make poor choices when they don't have information and options."

– A focus group participant

- Aboriginal women want to see Gladue reports for the courts funded. These reports are usually prepared alongside pre-sentence reports. They examine historical and social factors particular to Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people have a court-determined right to have these factors considered. There are now local people trained to write Gladue reports, making these available to Island Aboriginal people who find themselves in the court system. Reports should continue to be prepared by Aboriginal people who have lived experience of Aboriginal ways of life.
- We join the call for Domestic Violence Death Reviews and Child Death and Serious Injury Reviews for PEI. These processes are another example of the kinds of things recommended in the Hennessey/Campbell inquest. Recommendations from this inquest require further study and analysis, including gender analysis. We call for a collaborative approach to determining next steps from the inquest, with a role for community-based experts.

Bonus Selection

- Amendments made to the Human Rights Act in the fall of 2013 to specifically prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression, coupled with the Department of Health's funding for three surgeries for trans health: these are big steps for PEI's trans population.

Assessment of Other Considerations: **Status Quo** ***(2013: Somewhat Better)***

Focus Groups Say...

- A focus group participant talked about hearing from "women dealing with violence issues and access to kids, and the Family Law Court is overworked and overwhelmed." She questioned, "Are women really getting priority in the justice system when they are experiencing violence?"
- "There is no enforcement for custody orders, no matter how hard fought those agreements were," said one focus group participant. The challenge is to enforce without criminalizing parents. Another focus group participant noted, "Child custody issues get so muddy (in violence and abuse situations) – I know so many women who won't report violence because they are fearful of Child Protection. Or they won't go after child support – just to be left alone (by their ex partner)."
- "As has been said for years, we really should have a child advocate – it would address lots of concerns."

Category Summary

There has been little movement on some crucial files related to access to justice: most notably, the domestic violence court option. While there has been no public progress on this file, Council members want to emphasize their support for those in government who are working hard to keep this on the table. As in 2013, Council members recognize that without major reforms, the justice system will never be able to keep pace with demand for legal aid and legal advice. The Council does appreciate the ongoing efforts to make the best of what exists. We want the existing system to do its work with sensitivity to gender differences and diversity differences.

Women's Health

We expect the provincial government to sustain a strong system for acute care. We also expect the provincial government to relieve future burdens on the acute care system by continuing work in wellness and health promotion. To improve wellness, we expect government to recognize whole-body, holistic health, and to address social determinants of health, such as income, gender, language, and culture.

Priority Actions

Improved support for seniors' prescription drug costs

Little or No Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

➡ During the election campaign, government promised to cap the price of generic drugs at $20 for people who don't have private drug insurance. This is positive. However, focus group comments suggest this policy may have unintended consequences that may require follow-up and evaluation with gender and diversity in mind.

A review of funding and services in mental health, especially Community Mental Health, as recommended by the Auditor General

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

↗ Following a comprehensive review of mental health and addictions services, Council was very pleased that Dr. Rhonda Matters began work as PEI's first Chief Mental Health and Addictions Officer in January 2014. She is responsible for development of the long-term strategy for mental health and addictions in the Province. Already, a short-term strategy has been developed to support women in their various roles. Additionally, the Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council was formally established in March 2014 and included a representative from the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Since May 2014, the Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council has met monthly to advise and provide guidance on the development of a long-term strategy for PEI.

Increased funding for addiction services, such as more addiction rehabilitation services, extended care facilities, and recovery homes in more communities across PEI, in physically accessible spaces

Good Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

↗ In November 2013, an Addictions Action Plan was announced with seven investments ($1.25 million in funding) in addictions services (prevention, treatment, and aftercare). Government reports progress in each area. In October 2014, government announced new investments of $9 million over three years to help ensure that Island youth have better access to enhanced mental health and addictions treatment. Investments included a 12-bed PEI Youth Recovery Centre (with expansion and relocation of the Strength program to the new centre), a dedicated youth mental health unit to offer up to 12 beds for children and youth with mental health conditions, and a behavioral support team of mental health professionals who will work with youth and families to address moderate to severe disruptive behaviors that can be associated with a range of mental health conditions.

Continued steps towards and support for the Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner (SANE) program

Good Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

↗ Council members strongly support that the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program has transitioned to an Enhanced Emergency Sexual Assault Services (EESAS) program with guidance from the Premier's Action Committee. In PEI, it was determined not feasible to have SANE nurses available 24/7 at both Prince County and Queen Elizabeth Hospitals. Instead, a specialized training program qualifies Emergency nurses to provide care to victims of sexual assault and to conduct the portions of the exam and forensic evidence collection that are within nurses' scope of practice. EESAS is a good model for our mostly rural province.

Steps towards greater reproductive justice on Prince Edward Island (such as support for IVF treatments, access to abortion procedures on PEI, steps towards a sexual health clinic, and/or legislation to support midwifery and other reproductive health services)

Little or No Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

↘ As of April 2015, not only was government failing to act to protect women's sexual and reproductive health, but the provincial situation was worsening. Women or couples who desire or require assistance to get pregnant now have no local fertility specialist. Women who do not wish to be pregnant continue to be forced off-Island for abortion care, and the Morgentaler Clinic closure in Fredericton exposed glaring inequities and abominable care of women in the PEI health system. There is still no access to midwifery, leaving birthing options extremely limited. A lobby group also grew recently around the need for services for post-partum syndrome and grieving after pregnancy loss and stillbirth. Taken in combination, these issues point to an absolute crisis in sexual and reproductive health. Latter-day actions in June 2015 point to some hope these issues will receive new attention.

Women's Health: Other Considerations

Highlights

- Government completed a comprehensive all-of-government review of mental health and addictions services and supports. An explicit requirement of the contract and elements of the work contained in the project was "consideration of gender and other intersecting forms of diversity be given" -- and there was also acknowledgment that people "respond better when interventions are trauma-informed." Council is following this closely and is available to provide support for gender analysis in the long-term provincial strategy for mental health and addictions.
- The long-awaited Wellness Strategy for PEI was released in 2014, and while public messages remain dishearteningly focused on modifying individual behaviours and short on addressing social determinants of health, such as income, culture, and gender, there are positive signs that these will inform and help guide implementation of the strategy. Mental wellness, including children's mental health, is prominently included. This is a big step. A gender-specific reference to risks for alcohol consumption for women who may become pregnant could open the door for much-needed action to support women who use alcohol and to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and to support and help those women, children, and families that are affected by it. An FASD strategy is needed.

> "There seems to be very little available provincially for children's mental health. I refer a lot of parents to Play Therapy at Catholic Family Services, and I know they're very busy with counselling services. Often, in our case the mothers can't manage some of the children's behaviours anymore or the children have experienced some kind of trauma and mom is looking for support."
> – A front-line worker

Bonus Selections

- Revisions to the legislation for Nurse Practitioners expanding NPs' scope of practice, coupled with an increase in the number of NPs to improve access to primary care, including nurse-led pap screening clinics, are a very positive development.
- The 811 telehealth number for non-emergency medical questions supports women's health and assists caregivers. Because it operates in both English and French, it also supports diversity.

Assessment of Other Considerations: **Somewhat Better** ***(2013: Status Quo)***

Focus Groups Say...

- About capping costs of generic drugs, a senior raised a warning: "Legislating drug charges for people with private insurance plans mean a massive impact on insurers. Insurers have already started delisting drugs and off-loading expenses onto subscribers. If premiums increase, this will put a lot of pressure on fixed incomes."
- Lack of safe local access to abortion care puts women's lives and health at risk. Researcher Dr. Colleen MacQuarrie summed up some of the harm for the Chairs Circle consultation: "A surprising number of women reported that they were resorting to abortion myths and ideas by consuming lots and lots of alcohol to induce an abortion. Also, they often drink enough to numb the pain of self-harm, like throwing themselves down a flight of stairs, to induce a spontaneous bleed."
- A focus group participant with a disability raised concerns about limiting definitions of health and ability: "The definition of disability within the DSP program (Disability Support Program) is way too narrow. They are splitting hairs between disability and medical conditions... The DSP is intended to provide supports for anybody with a disability, but lots of people with diabetes or epilepsy or mental health issues do not qualify."

Category Summary

There have been admirable gains in mental health and addictions, with some structures in place and in development that the Province can build on to address what is widely experienced as a crisis in care in both these areas. From a gender perspective, what mental health and addictions share in common is a need for gender-sensitive and trauma-informed responses. It remains impossible in PEI to talk about women's health without talking about gaps in sexual and reproductive health and care for those who wish to become pregnant, wish to end a pregnancy, or wish for options like midwifery for their childbirth. As long as PEI remains the only province in Canada with no in-province access to abortion care, this issue will remain a flashpoint, and activists in the community will not rest until local access is achieved in PEI hospitals. A ground-breaking June 2015 agreement to allow women to self-refer for abortion care in Moncton, NB, suggests a new direction is possible with a new government.

Supports for Caregivers

We expect the provincial government to value the often unpaid and underpaid work of caregivers, often women, who care for children or adults, including seniors. To allow caregivers full participation in the life of Island society, government must enact policies that increase supports, not burdens, for caregiving.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Increased funding for home care for seniors and/or respite care programs for their caregivers

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- Home care and respite care are entering into government consciousness, due to growing need in the community. A number of programs are expanding to address emerging needs. Council members applaud expansion of the Seniors Mental Health Resource Team which provides assessment, treatment, and caregiver support; Queens Enhanced Home Care for Frail Seniors providing additional hours of service to allow seniors to return home from hospital sooner and safer; planning underway to create a continuum of care for dementia patients; and an increased emphasis on respite care in programs such as Home Care's Geriatric Palliative Care program.

Increased access for child care for Island families, especially for infants

Some Progress
(2013: Good Progress)

- Government reports that overall, child care spaces have increased by 1.6% from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014. Excluding school-age program, spaces have decreased 3.9%. However, there are more child care spaces than are being filled; supply exceeds demand. Council points out continued lack of child care options for families that need care outside 9:00 to 5:00 office hours. And these past two winters, storm closures were a hardship for many. Parents of young children cannot access employment without affordable child care options.
- Government reports that there was a 6% decrease in infant spaces from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014. Despite the decrease, there has been an overall 46% increase in infant spaces since 2010-2011. Infant spaces remain an area where demand continues to exceed supply. The effect of this on working parents can't be underestimated.
- PEI is one of only a few provinces that has regulated parent fees. Parent fees for regulated child care are still high, limiting access. For a family with one infant and one preschooler, it would cost $15,860 for one year of child care.

Continued investment in early childhood care and education that increases quality, accessibility, affordability, and focuses on child development

Good Progress
(2013: Good Progress)

- Investment in early childhood care and education is the flagship accomplishment of the Ghiz government. While little improved in the 2013 to 2015 period, prior achievements to continue to have positive effects. As of May 2015, all kindergarten teachers who transferred into the public school system from the private sector, and who did not already hold a PEI Teachers' Certificate, will have completed the Bachelor of Education Early Years Program at UPEI. Additionally, government has continued to invest in the education of Early Years Centre staff through training and professional development offerings. Early childhood educators benefited from the introduction of a recognized wage scale, a very good move; now into year six with the scale, there needs to be a second-phase scale developed and implemented to support early childhood educators.

Improved child care subsidies for lower-income families

Little or No Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- Community Services and Seniors increased the Child Care Subsidy Program per diem rate in July, 2014 in accordance with the Preschool Excellence Initiative. On July 1, 2014, daily rates paid for child care subsidy were increased from $33 to $34 for infants, $27 to $28 for two year olds, and $26 to $27 for three-to-five year olds.
- However, rate increases help fewer people unless they work hand in hand with expanded eligibility. In April 2015, CBC reported "the number of children covered under the child care subsidy program... declined steadily from 2011 to 2014... Over the same time frame spending on child care subsidies dropped from $3,659,563 in 2011 to $2,965,602 in 2014, a 19% drop." Government argues that after 2010, registration in full-day, in-school kindergarten affected the number of children and families requiring child care support.

Steps towards implementing the "Triple P" positive parenting program for PEI

Good Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- The Triple P Positive Parenting Program "aims to prevent problems in the family, school and community before they arise and to create family environments that encourage children to realize their potential." The government reports that PEI's roll-out of Triple P has been carefully planned for an optimal mix of programs that will also maximize the reach into the population. Practitioners have been recruited and received the first trainings in May 2015. Parents express a strong desire for parenting supports and would like to see roll-out happen faster.

Support for Caregivers: Other Considerations

Highlights

- Council acknowledges increases over the past two years to housing initiatives for seniors wishing to remain in their homes. For example, in November 2014, the Seniors Home Repair Program increased the allowable lifetime grant from $1,500 to $2,000. Council points out that this is a small amount when it comes to home repairs, providing enough to replace some windows and doors (for instance), but not a roof or an unsafe chimney. The Seniors Safe @ Home Program is a new program for 2015 which provides up to a $5,000 lifetime grant for modifications to a seniors' home or the home of a family member to allow the senior to remain in their home or the home of the family member. Modifications have to "enhance accessibility and help to maintain health and safety." Such home modifications can be intensely expensive.
- Council values advances in supports for caregiving in the Health system. For example, government reports the Provincial Integrated Palliative Care Program's mandate continues to grow in importance to women as clients, caregivers, and professional staff by improving palliative care delivered across the Island in acute care, long-term care, palliative care or a person's home.

"Caregivers for people with disabilities are undervalued and unrecognized. Families, mostly women, are providing years of care to children, to seniors, to the chronically ill and disabled."

– A focus group participant

- Nevertheless, Council members assess from reports that after several years of significant attention and investment, supports for caregivers and caregiving have stalled short of the finish line. Council members note there is a lot of caregiving other than for children, and many women remain stuck in the middle. Adequate respite for caregivers of seniors, vulnerable adults, and people with disabilities is very much needed.
- There is increasing awareness in Prince Edward Island of the challenging lives of grandparents who take on the role of primary caregiver to their grandchildren. Research by the Community Legal Information Association exposes the challenges grandparents face and the gaps in supports and services when a grandparent is the primary caregiver. We need better solutions than grandparents struggling to make ends meet for young children on Old-Age Security and the Canada Pension Plan: these were not designed to meet children's needs. With a high number of Aboriginal children in care, Aboriginal women call for funding for kinship care by grandparents or others, to help Aboriginal children stay in community, wehere cultural and family connections are.

Bonus Selection

- The new PEI Provincial Palliative Care Centre, a 10-bed unit in close proximity to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, will be a focal point for leadership in palliative care to help patients, families, caregivers, and health-care workers.

Assessment of Other Considerations: **Status Quo** ***(2013: Somewhat Better)***

Focus Groups Say...

- The number of available child care spaces for children under eighteen months in Charlottetown is terribly inadequate. In the words of one new parent, "We would have had to register at least a year before I even got pregnant to have a spot. And there is very little diversity of options, other than large institutionalized settings."
- Lack of child or elder care limits options for caregivers, especially for those on Social Assistance. Ineligibility for subsidies or inability to find child care spaces can result in lost opportunity. A focus group participant outlined the challenges women with young children face, "Women are increasingly told that it is not in their case plan to get training or upgrading for employment. The province is paying for seats at Holland College but they are vacant. Women are being told they are eligible for support, but when they apply they are turned down. This means they won't be able to have any training or education opportunities until their children are school age."

Category Summary

The significance of the Ghiz government's action and investment in early childhood development is major. Bringing kindergarten into the public school system was a huge accomplishment, followed by the equally important establishment of a system of Early Years Centres. Council members urge government not to stand back and dust their hands, because there is still much work to do to improve the situation of caregivers, including caregivers to children – and especially seniors caring for other seniors and seniors caring for grandchildren. Direct financial support for caregivers, supportive and flexible systems for caregiving, and time for respite are all continuing issues. As demographics change, the face of caregiving on PEI is changing, but the face is still predominantly female.

Adult Education and Training

We expect the provincial government to continue to support women's equitable access to education and training, particularly in areas where women have been under-represented and in areas that are the focus of economic development.

Priority Actions

Example(s) of funding for programs that increase women's participation in trades and technology

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

➡ Post-Secondary and Continuing Education and SkillsPEI have partnered both as mentors and, in the case of Skills PEI, a funder, for the Trade HERizons program at Women's Network PEI. Trade HERizons supports awareness and engagement for women to explore careers in skilled trades. Training includes skills upgrading, career exploration and employability skills. Social Assistance clients with approved case plans have participated in the program, to help move from poverty to sustainable livelihood. Trade Herizons funding ended March 31, 2015, with limited promises for renewal. Council members look for Trade HERizons to be fully and sustainably funded as a bare first step towards increasing women's participation in trades and technology. Additionally, incentives and recruitment will help increase the number of women applications to programs such as the Island-wide Trades Apprenticeship Program, though numbers will remain limited as long as it remains challenging to access essential services and supports, such as child care and elder care and transportation.

Example(s) of improved supports for women and under-represented groups to develop work skills in priority economic development fields (aerospace, information technology, biotechnology) and/or traditional industries (farming, fishing, tourism)

Little or No Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

➘ Council members see the past four (and more) years of abject failure to integrate gender and diversity analysis with economic development planning in traditional and emerging sectors as an inexcusable error of government, with great cost to productivity, economic sustainability, and human potential.

Increased investment in programs and services that improve literacy and numeracy for adults

Some Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

➚ The federal government has abandoned its responsibilities for supporting literacy and numeracy for adults by cutting funding to literacy groups such as the PEI Literacy Alliance. In small but important ways, the Province is working to respond to this off-loading and to define its role to support adults with lower literacy.

➡ Post-Secondary and Continuing Education provides funding for literacy programs and General Education Development (GED) and upgrading programs for non EI-eligible learners, and SkillsPEI provides funding for EI eligible learners for adult Islanders who have not completed grade 12 to develop the skills required to obtain long-term meaningful employment. Community Services funds spaces in GED programs, and clients with approved case plans have attended GED classes while continuing to receive Social Assistance benefits. There is work to be done to reduce barriers to people accessing these programs, including child care supports and increasing the numbers of approved case plans so seats in these literacy programs can be filled.

Example(s) of Skills PEI programs or services that focus on developing skills for long-term, year-round employment

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

➡ The negative effects of federal government off-loading of programs and the end of labour market development agreements are being felt on the ground, despite the Province's best efforts. Innovation and Advanced Learning reports continued support for programs such as Skills PEI, Training PEI, Employ PEI, Self-Employ PEI, Graduate Mentorship, Work Experience PEI, Canada Job Grant, and individual projects supported under the Canada Job Fund Agreement such as Trade HERizons and a Women's Project.

Steps towards Island-wide public transit to increase access to education and training, employment, and services

Little or No Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

➘ Charlottetown continues to have a transit system, and there are limited bus runs between Charlottetown and Summerside. Government provides core funding for specialized transit services for people with disabilities, and provided them additional one-time grants in March 2015. But we remain very far from Island-wide public transit.

➚ One highlight: Social Assistance Program has amended its transportation policy to allow for the payment of bus passes for clients with access to Charlottetown Transit routes.

Adult Education and Training: Other Considerations

Highlights

- Council members anticipate good results from the Student Graduation and Transition Planner Project in the Department of Education. Its purpose is to promote improved career futures for PEI students by equipping them with the tools and opportunities to make informed choices and navigate successful transitions. Council will be looking for evidence that this transition planning supports and values a wide range of choices for all students to consider (beyond just post-secondary-track thinking) and that it encourages students to consider non-traditional roles for their gender.
- Council members value the role of public libraries as a resource place for all Islanders. The Confederation Centre Public Library and PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada partner to provide an EAL Volunteer Tutoring Program to help adult newcomers learn English, and libraries host nine English language conversation circles. The Public Library Service subscribes to three online resources specifically for anyone looking to improve their English-language skills and provides EAL resources to all public library patrons.
- Council members expressed hopefulness at Premier Wade MacLauchlan's initiative to engage Islanders to help set a new strategic path of economic growth for Prince Edward Island. The Board of Economic Advisors, which includes one woman and two men, will provide advice and analysis to the Premier and government on economic trends and policy. This advice urgently needs to integrate gender and diversity analysis, including a disability lens.

Trade HERizons Photo Credit: Angela Dowie Fine Lines Photography

A focus group member with a disability said too large a proportion of human rights complaints on PEI "are employment discrimination based on ability. This is disability discrimination."

- In order to benefit from investments in adult education and training and in economic development in general, women and vulnerable groups continue to need wrap-around public services such as transit and child care that make education and training more available to everyone.
- Federal changes to vital, income-stabilizing programs such as Employment Insurance are hitting individual Islanders, families, and communities hard. The Province cannot keep up with these changes.

Assessment of Other Considerations: **Status Quo** ***(2013: Status Quo)***

Focus Groups Say...

- "PEI loses skilled people because they are slow to recognize degrees and credentials from other countries." It is unclear from government reports what assistance for employability or training is available for newcomers to Canada.
- A newcomer to Canada sees great potential in PEI for independent workers: "In my experience, each one of us as immigrant women here have to start something ourselves. If you want something, really, it is easy. It is a small place. You just have to do it yourself." Other focus group participants discussed how having to "do it yourself" creates invisible barriers for those who are less independent as a result of family commitments, ability, or other challenges.
- Gaps in social and economic infrastructure affect people with disabilities or other disadvantages first: "The current transportation system is not accessible to people with disabilities in any way, shape or form. The lifts do not work, there are no accommodations for people with visual impairment or hearing impairments, and the bus schedule, you need a university degree to read it. There are no service standards whatsoever. And the equipment is inadequate."

Category Summary

Small gains in the area of adult education and training have been lost these past two years, mostly as a result of federal cutbacks and policy changes that leave provinces such as PEI scrambling to fill gaps. Meanwhile, adult Islanders' needs remain undiminished for education and training to prepare them for better livelihoods.
In the past eight years, the Ghiz government missed every possible opportunity to integrate gender and diversity analysis with economic development planning. As a result, economic development planning left behind Islanders who face any disadvantage, whether due to gender, ability, literacy, or credentials earned in another country.

Diversity and Inclusion

We expect the provincial government to actively engage our increasingly diverse population and to take special measures to include diverse and vulnerable groups in the social, cultural, economic, and democratic life of the Province.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

A strong focus on social inclusion and democratic participation in the Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty with the purpose of meeting the needs of identified vulnerable groups

Little or No Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

- While government reports that the Social Action Plan continues to be a priority for the Social Policy Committee, (a sub-committee of the Deputy Minister Council), there is no clear evidence from reports that the concepts of "social inclusion" and "democratic participation" are understood – let alone implemented – as a part of poverty elimination. Emphasis on social inclusion in the June 2015 Speech from the Throne gives hope for the future.

Evidence of increased consultation with minority and under-represented populations to ensure policies and legislation are informed by all Islanders

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- Evidence from government demonstrates that government takes its duty to consult First Nations increasingly seriously. The Provincial Policy on Consulting the PEI First Nations is the mechanism by which government ensures that the First Nations are consulted on issues that may impact on their asserted rights.
- All departments of government are able to identify ways they consult with and engage minority, vulnerable, or under-represented groups including women, First Nations, people with disabilities, French minority language groups, advocates for children in care, newcomers, and others. Fewer are able to identify how this consultation affects and informs policy and legislation. There are still indications that many departments feel it is sufficient to open consultations to "all Islanders" without special consideration of differences or barriers. An example would be encouraging "all Islanders" to participate in pre-budget consultations, held each year in advance of the budget.
- The Disability Action Council has become a Disability *Advisory* Council as a result of limited action. This Council strikes us as essential to advise the Interministerial Disability Policy Forum from the grassroots, but advice is wasted without being followed up with action.

Steps towards establishing a provincial Ombudsperson as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly to conduct independent investigations of complaints (including enforcement of a code of conduct for elected officials)

Little or No Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

- There have been no steps towards establishing an ombudsperson's office. Council welcomes news that Premier MacLauchlan appointed Shauna Sullivan-Curley, QC, as the province's first Ethics and Integrity Commissioner to ensure high standards of integrity and ethical conduct throughout government and the public service. However, the terms of reference do not cover the functions of an Ombudsperson that Council is looking for.

Increased funding for employment and economic development programs that enhance workforce attachment for people with disabilities

Little or No Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- All departments were invited to describe their activities on this priority action area. Many reported on initiatives to support people with physical disabilities in their own departments, but little beyond that. We are interested to learn more about the temporary position Community Services and Seniors has established for an "EmployAbilities Development Officer" for enhanced employment case management services for Disability Support recipients. We look for supports for people with physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities.

Changes to legislation that limit the use of substitute decision-making and allow for supported decision-making, in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- Council members are hopeful about the work government has been doing with community groups to develop supported decision-making legislation for PEI, to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The proposed legislation should provide increased powers for decision-making while also protecting vulnerable persons from potential abuses, and it must co-exist with health and guardianship legislation. This work has been led by Community Services and Seniors through the Director of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat (as Chair of the Interministerial Disability Policy Forum).

Diversity and Inclusion: Other Considerations

Highlights

- Council members pointed to some highlights of diversity work in the past two years. PEI 2014 projects and grants included and recognized women and diverse groups in unprecedented ways. Partnerships between community organizations and public libraries demonstrate again that public libraries are great supports for information-sharing on equality and diversity across PEI, in both English and French. The ArtSmarts program's focus in 2014-2015 on human rights was also welcome.
- Council says seemingly small steps can make a big difference for diverse groups. Highway Safety Division reports the Drivers Handbook is now offered in 4 languages (English, French, Arabic, Mandarin – Simplified Chinese); Drivers License, Motor Vehicle Registration and other Highway Safety information is now offered on the PEI Association for Newcomers website in seven languages; and there's a person now on staff at Highway Safety Charlottetown who speaks Mandarin and is being trained to do driver testing.
- Council remains encouraged that our education system continues to lead the way on diversity and inclusion, with curriculum documents, questions in Provincial Common Assessments, and graphics developed with gender and diversity issues in mind. Council also likes that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is part of a three-year project with the PEI Human Rights Commission whereby learning materials are being developed by pre-service teachers from UPEI as part of their practicum.

DiverseCity Montague
Craig Mackie, PEIANC

"The Island is a harder place to integrate. People are more into themselves and not so open to new people. But it is getting better, the door is opening. We are seeing more and more diversity of people and cultures. We can see the trend. The idea of diversity as a good thing is starting to be accepted."

– A focus group participant

- A tri-partite PEI-Canada-Mi'kmaq agreement on social, economic, health, welfare, and justice issues is an important tool. We challenge government to consult off-reserve Aboriginal Islanders, especially women, with awareness that one reason women may live off-reserve is to escape violence.
- One indication of the lack of social inclusion is the institutionalization of persons with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities. There have to be better options for people to live where they choose – and to support loving but exhausted and discouraged caregivers. Persons with intellectual disabilities are not often consulted on issues that matter to them and to all Islanders, and they have a lot to contribute.

Bonus Selections

- The new Interministerial Disability Policy Forum and the new Disability Lens offer hopeful signs for consideration of people with disabilities and coordination of services across government policies and departments.
- Collaboration between Child and Family Services and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI to develop a Child Protection Protocol that recognizes the historic harm caused by colonialism, residential schools, and the child protection "scoop" of First Nations children is a step in the right direction and a best practice for Canada.

Assessment of Other Considerations: Somewhat Better *(2013: Somewhat Better)*

Focus Groups Say...

- "It is the Islanders who need to be educated, you know? We need to create awareness for the Islanders of how to be welcoming. Most of the newcomers come from very diverse cultures and they are used to being open to diversity. Islanders are just starting to understand the many benefits of immigrants living here."
- "Nobody wants to hire anybody in a wheelchair. I have been looking for work for years. They assume everyone with a disability is going to require lots of extra costs and that we won't be good employees. There is still tons of work to be done to enlighten employers."
- "Sixty-five per cent of the homes that receive Social Assistance are headed by a person with disabilities. Social Assistance is a subsidy program primarily for people with disabilities. That's why it is allowed to be run at the sub-standard level it runs at, because people with disabilities are so disenfranchised, with no political voice."

Category Summary

There is a lot happening in Prince Edward Island with respect to diversity, and, taken as a whole, the work is impressive. However, there are greater challenges to translate *diversity* into *inclusion*. There also remain challenges to recognize and address where gender and diversity *interact* to create multiple layers of disadvantage. Differences in gender, differences in ability, differences in language and culture, differences of race: These all continue to have real-world effects on income, opportunity, belonging, and more.

Women's Economic Status

We expect the provincial government to set a high priority on improving the health, dignity, and well-being of Islanders who live with less than a livable income. Livable income means that people are able to meet their basic needs in good health and dignity and can also deal with emergencies. We urge government to consult and collaborate with low-income Islanders and community-based organizations as they act on a Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty.

Priority Actions

Increased social assistance rates that bring individuals and families up to the poverty line

Some Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

- Council acknowledges that Social Assistance rates saw increases in several areas between 2013 and 2015. For example, food rates saw several increases, with a five-year plan to improve all clients' food rates. However, food rate increases over five years will bring rates for all household types to just 70% of the research-based cost of a healthy food basket and will then index rates at that insufficient level. Council has been clear that anything less than 100% of the cost of a healthy food basket is unacceptable. More rate increases are listed on the next page.
- A social assistance program with rates that fail to allow recipients to meet basic needs for safe shelter, healthy food, and basic comforts is a very costly way to keep people in a state of impoverishment.

Increased funding for and construction of affordable, accessible, appropriate housing units, including housing that meets the needs of seniors and improves access to affordable housing for unattached individuals and individuals without young children

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- The Province continues to work hard to support affordable housing in the absence of adequate federal supports for housing. The province continues to be the largest landlord in PEI, with 463 family housing and 1,124 seniors' housing units located in communities across the Island. More analysis follows on the next page.
- People living in low income – especially renters and people with disabilities – continue to describe access to affordable, accessible, appropriate housing as a crisis. Too many live in expensive, unsafe, unhealthy conditions.

Example(s) of policies that support food security, especially among vulnerable groups (for example, seniors, people with fixed incomes, people with disabilities, lone parents, or newcomers to Canada)

Little or No Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

- While government demonstrates greatly increased understanding of food security these past two years, it's for a poor reason: research by Dr. Valerie Tarasuk that demonstrates between a fifth and a quarter of Island children live in households where there is worry about having enough food. That's too many hungry children – and adults.
- Food security programs and policies for children include school breakfast programs at 54 schools and alternative education sites. Government provided $100,000 in funding each year, and approximately 6,000 students received food. Breakfast programs are open to all and non-stigmatizing, which is good, but are unevenly distributed across Island schools and rely heavily on donations and volunteers, which are hard to sustain in needy communities.

Appropriate consultation and collaboration with individuals and community organizations as part of a Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty with targets and timelines

Little or No Progress
(2013: Little/No Progress)

- In planning the increase to social assistance food rates, Community Services staff consulted with advocates and community organizations in small meetings, then as part of a larger group. The larger group consultation was organized by community groups and was excellent; however, only one recommendation from that consultation made it into the proposal for increased food rates: a recommendation for ongoing consultation with community groups through a task force. Consultations did not influence the outcome, and food rate increases resulted in rates far too low to allow people to buy adequate healthy food.

Improvements to employment standards (including minimum wage) for non-unionized workers

Some Progress
(2013: Some Progress)

- The minimum wage has been increasing incrementally and will reach $10.50/hour in July 2015. Working 40 hours a week at $10.50/hour for 52 weeks would earn $21,840 a year, before taxes, or about $18,850 after taxes. This is close to the Market Basket Measure threshold for a one-person household but inadequate to support more than one person. And most people on minimum wage don't get 40 hours a week year-round. Non-unionized workers still need both better wages and better working conditions, encoded in employment standards.

Women's Economic Status: Other Considerations

Highlights

- In February 2015, figures came to light that showed multi-million-dollar underspending of funds that had been allocated for social assistance recipients, child care subsidies, and supports for children in care. Government claimed that no one who qualified for help was turned away, leaving Council members to seriously question qualification requirements and eligibility criteria. What is going on with eligibility? Why are the funds available to vulnerable people not getting to them? Council members and members of the community across PEI are appalled that millions of dollars dedicated to vulnerable Islanders were left on the table in the past two years while children are hungry, mothers are passing up meals to feed their children, people are living in unsafe housing, and pressure on food banks is escalating. There are just no words. Hopefully, a new strategic plan in Community Services will ensure spending is better monitored.
- Other examples of Social Assistance rate increases include a 2013 increase of 3% to shelter rates. In January 2014, government implemented an enhanced rate structure for Associate Families who provide community-based residential services for persons with disabilities. Government also increased fees paid to private dentists for dental services for Social Assistance recipients. In April 2015 the Social Assistance personal comfort rate increased from $53 to $71 per month. These are positive steps, as long as people qualify to receive them.
- To support affordable housing, new PEI Home Renovation Programs provide $1.3 million per year in forgivable loans to low- and moderate-income families. In each of the reporting years Community Services and Seniors Housing Services added 20 new rent supplements (total of 40) that allow Island seniors, families and persons with disabilities to live in privately owned rental units while paying rent at 25% of income, in the same manner as a person living in government-owned housing. This is a welcome initiative that now needs to be evaluated to ensure it is not driving rents up.

Time for Change Photo Credit: Gina Younker

"No one at financial services can teach low-income people how to budget the amount they are given. Because it is just not possible... I would like to issue a challenge to financial assistance to come up with a (sample) budget that could be scrutinized... Between you and me, there is just no way it stretches."

– A focus group participant

- People with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and invisible disabilities, as well as people with mental health problems, tell heartbreaking stories of inappropriate and inaccessible housing. This includes an apparent trend to institutionalizing people who, with proper support, could lead active lives in the community.

Assessment of Other Considerations: **Status Quo** ***(2013: Status Quo)***

Focus Groups Say...

- Speaking of news stories such as house fires caused by burning unsafe materials, one focus group participant said, "People are *dying* of poverty in this province. We have real-life examples of people dying because they don't have enough to live." Urgent need for a shelter for homeless women emerged as a strong priority.
- One focus group participant commented, "There is such a strong sense of shame about poverty on PEI – we blame people when they're poor. But poverty leaves no choices." Another added, "A basic income guarantee would help a lot." And another said, "Hearing all four leadership candidates commit to exploring basic income guarantee prior to the election was really significant to me. A livable income is a human right, not a luxury."
- A participant living in low income said, "The access to programs has gotten much worse in the past two years... There is no longer any effort made (by government workers) to address people's needs by stretching parameters and using their brains. That is totally discouraged. And certainly they do not use their hearts."

Category Summary

Council has been frustrated and discouraged by government's failure to address suffering and impoverishment. Setting a maximum food rate that covers only 70% of basic food needs entrenches hunger and severe food insecurity in Social Assistance recipients' households. This action is emblematic of the failed Social Action Plan to Reduce Poverty. It is inexcusable that millions of dollars from hard-won Social Assistance budgets were left unspent two years running rather than being used to meet the needs of vulnerable people. It's time for a proper poverty reduction strategy based on community consultation and full exploration of a basic income guarantee.

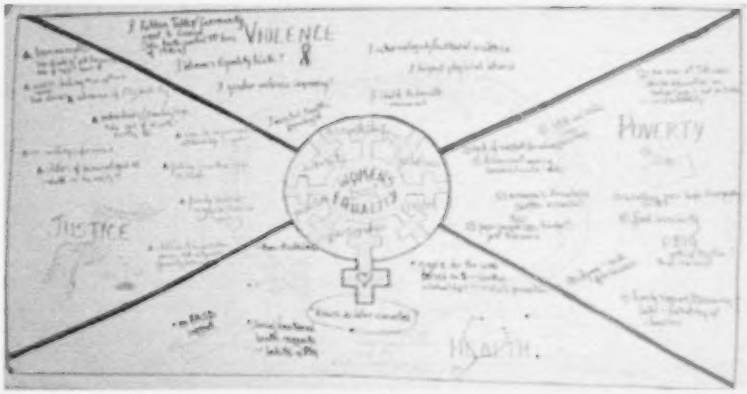
Process Notes

A Fair and Collaborative Process

- The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women decided on priority action areas and a approved a model for the 2013 and 2015 Equality Report Cards in July 2012. They distributed the proposed model, timeline, and assessment criteria to all departments of government.
- Each department of government completed a questionnaire about actions their department had taken to support women's equality and diversity.
- All members of the Advisory Council reviewed information from departments and from Council research and recorded their individual assessments through a survey.
- Using the survey results, the Advisory Council members agreed on draft assessments in each priority area, in a collaborative and consensus-based workshop. Members gave direction about the analysis to support assessments.
- Advisory Council staff conducted focus groups and consultations with women who are not well-represented in community organizations that the Council usually consults about the Report Card.
- PEI Status of Women staff shared draft grades and analysis with government representatives for corrections, updates, and other input.
- Advisory Council members and staff shared draft grades and analysis with expert community members and community organizations for corrections, updates, and other input.
- Based on feedback and new information from government and community, members of the Advisory Council made changes they were convinced were necessary to grades and analysis.
- PEI Status of Women staff finalized and released the Equality Report Card.

About the Focus Groups

- Three focus groups informed this report. One focus group took place with women and men with disabilities. Another was made up of women newcomers to Canada. The Chairs Circle, an annual consultation with past Chairpersons of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, served as an additional focus group for the Equality Report Card.



- Taken as a whole, the focus groups included 24 women and 6 men, ranging in age from youth to seniors. Participants included people living in urban, suburban, and rural communities.
- During the focus groups, one or more participants identified themselves as having personal, familial, and/or front-line professional work experiences with violence, abuse, separation or divorce, disability, mental illness, addictions, need for access to abortion, other kinds of health needs, poverty, unemployment, unsafe housing, food insecurity, caregiving responsibilities, racism, ableism, and/or discrimination based on gender.
- Focus group participants were not asked to identify their gender, age, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other markers of diversity.

Thanks and Acknowledgments

The members and staff of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women would like to thank the many groups in the community and in government that contributed information for this report. We thank those who received and reviewed whole or partial drafts and provided corrections, comments, insights, and analysis as we prepared this Equality Report Card. We particularly acknowledge the time that people and groups contributed on an unpaid volunteer basis.

Within government:

- Departmental representatives in all departments of government and in the government offices of Executive Council, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, and the Public Service Commission.
- The Premier, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and all Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Government.

Within voluntary-sector and community-based organizations:

Representatives from community organizations were asked to review parts of the draft Equality Report Card. Most of these groups provided feedback:

Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI
Abortion Rights Network PEI
Actions Femmes
AIDS PEI
ALERT
PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada
BORN PEI
PEI Coalition for Fair EI
PEI Coalition for Women in Government
Community Legal Information Association of PEI (CLIAPEI)
Cooper Institute
PEI Council of People with Disabilities
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) PEI
Early Childhood Development Association
East Prince Women's Information Centre (EPWIC)
PEI Family Violence Prevention Services
PEI Food Security Network
Justice Options for Women
PEI Literacy Alliance
Mi'kmaq Family Resource Centre
PEI People First
PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre
Women's Network PEI
PEI Working Group for a Livable Income

Thanks...

- Individual women and men in the community who were consulted by Advisory Council members for their comments and perspectives.
- Women and men who have called the Advisory Council on the Status of Women office to share their experiences and to help us identify the gaps in policy, services, and legislation that affect their lives.
- Participants in the focus groups whose analysis complemented that of the Advisory Council members and kept the Equality Report Card grounded.
- Prince Edward Island Translation Services.

This report card is dedicated to the memory of our Chairperson Diane Kays, who died suddenly on March 28, 2015, during planning for this report. We miss her but know she is still present in these pages.

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